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SUBJECT: JUNCKER TRIES TO STOP SPECULATION ABOUT A SUCCESSOR AND HIS
POSSIBLE MOVE TO AN EU POST

Classified by CDA Steven H. Kraft, Reasons 1.5 b and d.

11. (U) Popular Luxembourg Prime Minister and chairman of the Eurozone, Jean-Claude Juncker, tried to end speculation about who will succeed him during the October 21 conference of his governing Christian Social People's Party (CSV). He surprised the party faithful by announcing that he was tired of all the talk about his possible successor and stated that he "planned to run again" in the next general election in 2009. He added that he had no plans for a "career in Europe," seeking to dampen rumors - prevalent since 2004 - that he wants a leadership position in the European Union.

12. (C) COMMENT: Juncker's announcement may have been intended in part to preempt political critics who emphasize a "Luxembourg-first" policy in contrast to Juncker's more EU-centric reputation. It may also have been designed to head off a possible succession struggle between Justice Minister Luc Frieden and Labor Minister Francois Biltgen, both of whom remain close to Juncker and are considered front runners to replace him. Despite this recent development and his 2004 decision to reject the presidency of the European Commission and continue to serve as Luxembourg's Prime Minister, Juncker will likely remain an attractive candidate for a senior EU position because of his leadership of the Eurozone and his proven capacity to build bridges and broker compromise among the bigger EU powers.
KRAFT